



February 27, 2023

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Mary Lord RN, I have been an RN in Long Term Care for 38 years, and prior to becoming a RN I was a Certified CNA for a total of 43 years in the nursing home industry. I am now the VP of Clinical Operations for Ark Healthcare and Rehabilitation; we own 3 buildings in Connecticut which includes 384 beds in totality. I want to testify to my grave concern about the present situation of our industry. Now three years into the COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency and I can say that our nursing homes, the residents we serve, and our employees, continue to be challenged like in no other time in our history of providing services in Connecticut. Anyone who has worked in healthcare or has worked during the covid 19 pandemic knows that staffing shortages have pervaded every sector and industry during this challenging time. The Long-Term care industry has suffered significant loss in the workforce, with nearly 210,000 jobs lost in a 2-year period. Operators and skilled nursing leadership are facing unprecedented cost and expenses to staff buildings according to the current required ratios. Never before experienced inflation and the ongoing staffing crisis resulting in increased costs to obtain qualified and sufficient staffing, are the top issues that are not addressed in the current budget recommendation. The cost of utilities, heating, food have risen significantly and continue to rise. The proposed funding for nursing homes does not recognize what is happening in relationship to the increase in the cost of daily operational expenses, and I am asking you to recognize the real inflation and inflated staffing costs that we are experiencing and have it reflected in the budget.

The resources the state legislature previously provided us to boost staff pay has had a positive impact on our exorbitant costs. Having to paying overtime, shift differentials, bonus pay and the increased use of nursing pools puts costs way beyond what the state is paying in the Medicaid rates. Our employees are losing ground against inflation, just as we are. More funding is needed in the budget to address the unbelievable inflation we are facing and to help us with our soaring labor costs. Our skilled nursing facilities needs more resources to boost the pay of our extraordinary employees, but the proposed budget doesn't address this issue.

As the pandemic continues to wane and is set to expire in the middle of May, operators, centers, and patients will be forced to absorb a multitude of costs and expenses that have been offset by numerous waivers. In a time where facility closures and bankruptcy have become commonplace, The State needs to look closer at the budget and provide nursing homes with appropriate financial reimbursements for the residents in our care.

Respectfully Submitted, Mary Lord RN

Vice President of Clinical Operations Ark Healthcare and Rehabilitation